

BC PARKS

2011/12 Annual Report



BC Parks



Cover photo: Strathcona Park, British Columbia's first provincial park, celebrated its 100th birthday in 2011.

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About BC Parks

BC Parks is responsible for the designation and management of a system of parks and protected areas located throughout the province.

BC Parks' mission is to protect representative and special natural places within the province's parks and protected areas system for world-class conservation, outdoor recreation, education and scientific study. The parks and protected areas system is governed primarily by the *Park Act*, *Ecological Reserve Act* and the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*, and their associated regulations and policies.

Who we are

BC Parks is part of the Ministry of Environment. In 2011/12 there were the equivalent of 194 full-time staff (FTEs) working directly for BC Parks—40 staff were located in Victoria and 116 full-time staff worked out of regional offices across the province (including full-time rangers). An additional 38 FTEs funded 87 seasonal ranger positions.

BC Parks' services and management are delivered through a headquarters office and five regional offices located throughout the province. The regions are subdivided into nine section offices.

Most on-the-ground facilities and services are managed by contractors, called Park Facility Operators (PFOs). Some PFOs manage one park and others manage a grouping or bundle of parks in a specific location. PFOs provide onsite management, service and routine maintenance in day use areas and campgrounds. Standards for this service are set by the Province.

What we manage

British Columbia's parks and protected areas are a public trust containing locally, regionally, nationally and internationally significant natural and cultural values and outdoor experiences. Since the establishment of Strathcona Park as the first provincial park in 1911, the system has grown to become the third largest parks system in North America (after the Canadian and the U.S. national park systems) and the largest provincial/territorial parks system in Canada.

As of March 31, 2012, the system managed by BC Parks included 1,000 parks and protected areas, covering approximately 13.6 per cent of the province or approximately 13.16 million hectares.



BC Parks Protected Areas System as of March 31, 2012

Designation	Number	Area (hectares)
Ecological Reserves	148	160,424
Class A Parks	611	10,435,209
Class B Parks	2	3,778
Class C Parks	14	495
Conservancies	144	2,119,131
Protected Areas	75	383,268
Recreation Areas	6	56,237
Total	1,000	13,158,492

What are...?

Ecological reserves are reserved for ecological purposes including areas for: research and education; representative examples of natural ecosystems; recovery areas from human modification; protection of rare or endangered flora and fauna; and, unique examples of botanical, zoological or geological phenomena. While most ecological reserves are open to the public, they are not established for outdoor recreation and no extractive activities are allowed.

Class A parks are Crown lands dedicated to the preservation of their natural environment for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of the public. Development in a Class A park is limited to that which is necessary for the maintenance of its recreational values. Activities such as grazing, hay cutting and other uses (except commercial logging, mining or hydro electric development) that existed at the time the park was established may be allowed to continue in certain parks.

Class B parks differ from Class A parks in that a Class B park may permit a broader range of activities and uses provided that such uses are not detrimental to the recreational values of the park.

Class C parks differ from Class A parks in that a Class C park must be managed by a local board. They are generally small parks providing local recreational amenities.

Conservancies are set aside for: (a) the protection and maintenance of their biological diversity and natural environments; (b) the preservation and maintenance of social, ceremonial and cultural uses of First Nations; (c) the protection and maintenance of their recreational values; and (d) development or use of natural resources in a manner consistent with the purposes of (a), (b) and (c) above. Conservancies provide for a wider range of low impact, compatible economic opportunities than Class A parks, however, commercial logging, mining and hydroelectric power generation, other than local run-of-the-river projects, are prohibited.

Protected areas are established by Order in Council under the *Environment and Land Use Act* and generally have one or more existing or proposed activities that are not usually allowed in a park (e.g., proposed industrial road, pipeline, transmission line or communication site). Allowable activities are determined by specific provisions when the area is established as well as relevant sections of the *Park Act* and regulations.

Recreation areas are set aside for public recreational use. The majority of these areas were established to allow a mineral resource evaluation under a time-limited tenure; no other industrial activities are permitted. All current recreation areas are being evaluated to determine if they should become fully protected or returned to integrated resource management lands.



Cape Scott Park

BC Parks Principles

Decisions regarding the parks and protected areas system are guided by the following principles:

Enduring public trust

The parks and protected areas system is an enduring legacy and we are accountable to the people of British Columbia to manage it effectively, now and in the future.

We actively pursue collaborative relationships and contemporary roles for First Nations for protecting and enhancing natural, cultural and recreational values.

Relationships and connections with users, communities, partners, sponsors and donors are essential to the long-term viability of the parks and protected areas system.

Conservation of natural and cultural assets

Ecological integrity is maintained and conserved within a dynamic and changing environment.

Leadership in knowledge acquisition and reporting, and the understanding of ecological processes, cultural heritage and their interaction is crucial for management and responding to environmental change.

We will maximize opportunities for education about natural, cultural and recreation values, and will assist the public to cope with environmental changes.

High quality visitor services

We will manage recreational facilities in an environmentally sensitive manner and, provide a range of facilities and programs that are accessible and reflect provincial demographics.

We will seek opportunities to promote the parks and protected areas system as an integral component of a healthy, active lifestyle.

We will coordinate the provision of outdoor recreational opportunities with the private sector, tourism industry associations, other levels of government and other government agencies.

Effective management

We will pursue innovative revenue streams and partnerships to ensure financial sustainability.

Although parks and protected areas may provide different levels of visitor services, we will maintain standards relating to protecting a park or protected area's natural and cultural assets.

Executive Summary

This year marked the celebration of the 100th birthday for BC Parks as well as many other achievements and successes.

BC Parks 100

BC Parks celebrated 100 years of provincial parks in 2011 (BC Parks 100), marking the enactment of British Columbia's first provincial park, Strathcona, on March 1, 1911. Over 25 major initiatives and 250 events involving more than 2,500 volunteers occurred in celebration. BC Parks' centenary was a 'grassroots' celebration that engaged a diverse group of community partners and sponsors. BC Parks 100 inspired many of our almost 20 million visitors and attracted new visitors too. The events drew together rural and urban communities, First Nations, youth, artists, tourists, and individuals interested in natural and cultural heritage and outdoor recreation. Initiatives to commemorate this milestone included contests, conservation projects, recreational events, conferences and community celebrations.

Canadian Parks Council Merit Award

BC Parks was presented with the Canadian Parks Council Merit Award that recognized BC Parks for its leadership with respect to working with First Nations and more specifically, BC Parks work with First Nations and conservancy management. This award recognized that beyond conservancies, BC Parks has done an outstanding job in collaborating with First Nations across the province.

Acquisitions

BC Parks acquired three properties totalling 193 hectares valued at just over \$7.39 million. A key acquisition was in one of the most threatened areas in British Columbia, situated in the Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone on Salt Spring Island. With the purchase of this property, the last piece in the Burgoyne Bay/Mount Maxwell protected area complex is protected.

Management Plans

Twenty-three management plans were approved, the highest number since 2006. Management plans are key documents that provide the long-term guidance for the management of a protected area. The first management plans for the North Coast conservancies were approved as well as the management plan for the globally significant Khutzeymateen Park (a.k.a. Khutzeymateen/K'tzim-a-deen Grizzly Sanctuary). Eleven management plans for the conservancies on Haida Gwaii were also approved.

Monitoring

The Long-term Ecological Monitoring (Citizen Science) Program was initiated during 2010/2011 in response to the Auditor General's Report on ecological integrity in BC Parks (Office of the Auditor General 2010). In 2011/12, each of the protocols were tested by staff and revised for broad application in 2012/13.

Facility Investments

BC Parks invested over \$10.8 million in 84 infrastructure projects in 55 parks. For example, BC Parks invested \$1,095,000 in a facility revitalization project in Kikomun Creek Park to add 37 campsites, 11 with electrification, a rental cabin and a toilet/shower building.

BC Parks Reservation Service

More than 96,000 reservations were made through Discover Camping Reservation Service—more than a 10% increase from the 2010 season. There were also several enhancements made to the system in 2011/12 to make it easier for customers to make reservations.

Partnerships and Donations

The BC Parks Partnership and Donation Program is designed to provide opportunities for individual citizens, community groups, non-government agencies and private corporations to work with BC Parks on mutually beneficial projects. In 2011/12 over \$500,000 was donated to the Park Enhancement Fund. Since 2008, the Park Enhancement Fund has raised over \$1.3 million from donations and community and corporate partnerships. BC Parks is known as a valuable partner and has attracted significant donations since the establishment of the Park Enhancement Fund.

Other Achievements:

- The Province made additions to five existing Class A parks and two protected areas, encompassing more than 1,269 hectares. Four protected areas were also established.
- The third BC Protected Areas Forum was held in December 2011. The goal of the forum was to facilitate research and its application to parks and protected areas management.
- Online registration for backcountry camping was offered for the first time in 2011.
- The BC Parks website continued to be one of the most popular websites with an increase of over ten per cent use with over 7,100 visits.
- As of May 3, 2011 parking became free in all provincial parks to encourage families to take advantage of our world-class parks and protected areas system.
- BC Parks was a key participant in the merging of avalanche policies in the Natural Resource Sector and continues to be a leader in providing training in avalanche safety to Natural Resource Sector staff.
- BC Parks is working towards a sustainable and robust volunteer program. In 2011/12 work was initiated on developing a volunteer strategy informed by community workshops and an online survey.

BC Parks 100

BC Parks celebrated its 100th birthday in 2011, marking the enactment of British Columbia's first provincial park, Strathcona, on March 1, 1911.

Over 25 major initiatives and 250 events involving over 2,500 volunteers occurred to celebrate BC Parks' centenary. BC Parks approached its centenary as a 'grassroots' celebration and engaged a diverse group of community partners and sponsors to help deliver BC Parks 100. BC Parks 100 was formally launched on May 3, 2011 by Premier Christy Clark and Minister of Environment, Terry Lake, at Mount Seymour Park.

100 Geocaches

In partnership with the Geocaching Association of B.C. and sponsored by the Camping and RVing Coalition, BC Parks held a centennial themed geocache initiative. Caches, which contained BC Parks 100 commemorative coins and other special BC Parks 100 memorabilia, were placed in 100 locations across the province in B.C.'s parks and protected areas, recreation sites and private campgrounds.



Community Events

Numerous community celebrations helped BC Parks ring in their 100th birthday. Some groups hosted parades in their communities; Campbell River hosted Strathcona Park Banners, while others ran special events in their local parks and protected areas. While there are too many to mention (over 100), BC Day and the Scouts Canada Pacific Jamboree are examples of the range of partnerships that strengthened relationships and connection to parks and protected areas.

BC Day Celebrations

BC Parks partnered with the Provincial Capital Commission to hold BC Day events to celebrate parks. Approximately 5,000 people attended BC Day events across the province. Celebrations highlighted by appearances of Jerry the Moose included interpretation programming, scavenger hunts, arts and crafts, horseshoe contests and lots of cake.

Scouts Canada Pacific Jamboree

In July 2011, Scouts Canada's Pacific Council hosted their Pacific Jamboree at Camp Byng, Sunshine Coast, and in Porpoise Bay Park with a BC Parks 100 theme. BC Parks rangers and Jerry the Moose participated in Jamboree activities including sailing, games, leader training and more. As part of BC Parks 100, Scouts Canada and BC Parks partnered on a competition for a special edition Scouts Crest. Owen A., a young Scout from Victoria, B.C. was the winning entry. Several thousand crests were created and earned by participating Scouts across the province.



Conservation Events

As part of BC Parks 100, in partnership with communities, BC Parks facilitated events in 2011 celebrating the variety of conservation work that happens in parks and protected areas. BC Parks 100 Conservation Events fell under three themes:

Ecological Reserve Warden Day



These events were organized to highlight the activities of an Ecological Reserve Warden, bringing attention to the amazing work that these volunteers do. The activities of *Ecological Reserve Warden Day* ranged from interpretive hikes to monitoring and inventory work or creating displays to showcase ecological reserves at community events.

Science in the Park



A wide variety of scientific and research activities occur in parks and protected areas across the province. *Science in the Park* was an opportunity for researchers to highlight the work they do and to allow the public to participate in certain scientific activities. Events involved the public taking measurements, recording data and even analysing results. They ranged from "toad in a bucket" (Toadfest in the Kootenays) to some community-based amphibian work in Lakelse Lake Park.

Communities for Conservation



Much of the conservation work that happens in BC Parks is a result of volunteer work of community groups and environmental organizations. *Communities for Conservation* was a chance for community groups to develop an event that focused on their organization's activities and provided support to undertake unique initiatives in celebration of BC Parks 100.

Arts in the Parks



The Arts in the Parks program supported arts and First Nations arts organizations throughout B.C. with projects and events that celebrated BC Parks 100. In partnership with the Assembly of B.C. Arts Councils and the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, BC Parks hosted 22 arts and cultural events from March to December 2011 with a total of \$100,000 funding allocated.

Community Legacy Program



The Community Legacy Program offered opportunities for registered not-for-profit societies, charities, First Nations governments, bands or tribal councils, local governments, schools, school districts and post secondary institutions to apply for project funding of up to \$20,000 to carry out improvements and enhancements to BC Parks throughout 2011. Projects were carried out in 27 parks and resulted in \$780,023 invested in educational facilities and signs, trail enhancements, infrastructure to support recreational activities, conservation and restoration projects, and upgrades that make provincial parks more accessible to a variety of users. Most importantly communities connected with BC Parks to building lasting legacy projects from which generations to come will benefit.

BC Parks 100 Passport



The BC Parks 100 Passport was a partnership with the Camping and RVing Coalition and Tourism BC. The passport engaged families in BC Parks' centenary and connected them with participating sites throughout the province. Close to 180 participating sites across the province included various parks and protected areas and tourism visitor centres. Participating sites distributed the passports, had unique stickers for collection, and had prizes available for qualifying participants.

Great Ranger Experience



The Great Ranger Experience was a video series created to celebrate park rangers. As BC Parks turned 100 years old, park rangers wanted to share their experiences working as stewards of B.C.'s parks and protected areas. Four short videos were prepared that showcase what park rangers contribute to the parks and protected areas system, and capture some of the spectacular landscapes of British Columbia. Featured park rangers share what is special about their favourite provincial parks, and most importantly, share why they are passionate about their jobs. The videos highlight a diversity of experiences in mountain/alpine parks, grassland parks and marine parks.

100 Years of Adventure

100 Years of Adventure was a series of eleven recreation-based events hosted in partnership with Mountain Equipment Co-op to celebrate and introduce families to various self-propelled adventure sports including paddling, hiking, running, rock climbing and mountain biking. Eleven community organizations were selected to receive \$2,000 in funding to support a community event that focussed on one of these activities.



100 for 100 Bench Program



BC Parks invited community groups, businesses, individuals and families to come together and join in the 100 for 100 Park Bench Challenge to sponsor a bench in a provincial park or protected area. Through a special purchase, BC Parks obtained 100 limited-edition centennial benches, made with recycled plastic, with the appearance of cedar and designed to withstand a wide range of temperatures and colour fading. The benches were hugely popular and BC Parks and its visitors will benefit for years to come from the generosity of everyone who was involved.

Healthy By Nature Conference

BC Parks collaborated with numerous organizations and agencies (Canadian Parks Council, Parks Canada, Child and Nature Alliance, Elders Council for Parks in B.C., BC Ministry of Health Services, B.C. Recreation and Parks Association, B.C. Healthy Communities, B.C. Ministry of Education, and the City of Vancouver) to host a forum to build regional momentum for the Healthy Parks Healthy People philosophy. It reconnected individuals, families and communities with nature. The event was action-oriented and set out clear strategies for linking human health and well-being with the natural world.



Healthy by Nature

BC Magazine and Contest

"Share Your BC" was a contest run jointly with BC Magazine and BC Parks. The contest ran from March 15 to September 30, 2011 and invited people to submit up to 200 words sharing an experience they have had in a B.C. park. The BC Parks' adventure prizes included a two night stay at Tigh-Na-Mara and a caving tour in Horne Lake Caves Park, a two night stay at Porteau Cove Park cabins and a scenic floatplane tour of the area, and a 'Go Camping' package from BC Parks which included three nights camping, 2 travel mugs, a picnic blanket, 2 coffee cups, 2 water bottles, and a years subscription to BC Magazine. As well, BC Magazine commemorated our anniversary with a special edition in the summer of 2011 dedicated to BC Parks.



Get Outside BC Youth Leadership Project

Youth Leadership Project

Get Outside BC is a collaborative, youth-led project that strengthens youth attachment to BC Parks and wilderness. It was developed and piloted during BC Parks 100 as a way to engage a new generation of stewards for the next 100 years of BC Parks; and is continuing as a legacy for youth engagement in parks and protected areas. The project is a partnership between the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Parks Canada and BC Parks. Get Outside BC included a Youth Leadership Summit (July 6-8, 2011) with 40 young leaders, between 14 and 18, from across British Columbia participating in leadership and outdoor skill training, networking and



community event planning. There were youth-led events in parks on International Youth Day (August 12, 2011) where the youth participants planned and hosted their own outdoor events with other youth from their communities. These events reached over 400 people and ranged from outdoor concerts to multi-day camping trips.

The project wrapped up on October 22, 2011 when the participants took part in small, regional reunion events that were connected provincially by webcast. They reconnected, shared stories from their community events and planned for what they are going to do next as a network of Natural Leaders. This part of the project transitioned the youth into independent ambassadors for parks and protected areas in their communities.



Get Outdoors Educator Workshops

The Get Outdoors Educator Workshops were a partnership with Wild BC that provided ten free workshops to over 200 educators across the province. The workshop and the supporting curriculum guide were developed in 2009 in partnership with Wild BC, BC Parks, Parks Canada, MetroVancouver Parks and the B.C. Ministry of Education as a way to help teachers understand the importance of parks and protected areas as an outdoor classroom and to provide them with the necessary skills to feel comfortable teaching in natural environments.

Managing the System

Designations and Changes to the BC Parks System

B.C.'s parks and protected areas system continues to expand through land use planning processes and land acquisitions, adding lands for conservation and recreation.

In 2011/12, the Province made additions to five existing Class A parks and two protected areas, encompassing 1,269 hectares. In addition, Power River Watershed Protected Area and Thunderbird's Nest [*T'iitsk'in Paawats*] Protected Area were established as a result of the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement. Kakwa Protected Area was established as a result of direction in the Prince George Land and Resource Management Plan.



White Lake Grasslands Protected Area, located 20 kilometres southwest of Penticton, was expanded as a result of a private land donation on the western boundary of the protected area. The donated land contains several ecological communities at risk as well as habitat for numerous provincially and nationally designated species at risk.

Boundary Adjustments

BC Parks, at times, modifies the boundaries of parks and protected areas.

In 2011/12, boundary amendments were completed to two parks [Cariboo River Park and Anhluut'ukwsim Laxmihl Angwinga'Asanskwhl Nisga'a (a.k.a. Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park)] and one protected area (White Lake Grasslands Protected Area) to remove an existing road, to enable construction of a transmission line and to enable access to private property. The total amount of land removed in this manner was approximately 13 hectares. As part of the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement, lands totalling 2,388.6 hectares were removed from Big Bunsby, Brooks Peninsula and Tahsish-Kwois parks, as well as Checleset Bay Ecological Reserve. Some of the lands from Brooks Peninsula Park were established as Power River Watershed Protected Area.

Changes to the BC Parks System in 2011/12

New Protected Areas	Area (hectares)
Power River Watershed Protected Area	1,680
Thunderbird's Nest [T'iitsk'in Paawats] Protected Area	2,338
Kakwa Protected Area	458
Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Protected Area	10.5
Total area of new protected areas	4,486.5
Area Added to Existing Parks and Protected Areas	
Brooks Peninsula Park	1.3
Gordon Bay Park	48
Kakwa Park	1,083
Squitty Bay Park	38.5
Stawamus Chief Park	9.7
West Twin Protected Area	64
White Lake Grasslands Protected Area	24.6
Total area added to existing parks and protected areas	1,269.1
Total Area Added to System	5,756.6

Acquisitions

Each year the provincial government acquires lands for parks and protected areas through purchase, donation and/or exchange. Funding for these acquisitions is often augmented by individuals, corporations, and conservation organizations.

Working closely with a variety of partners, BC Parks acquired three properties in 2011/12, totalling 193 hectares and valued at just over \$7.39 million.

<i>Land Acquisitions</i>	<i>2009/10</i>	<i>2010/11</i>	<i>2011/12</i>
Land purchase value	\$ 19,500	\$9,134,279	\$7,390,000

The Antler Lake acquisition, located just north of Gold River, was acquired through a value for value land exchange with Western Forest Products. This has resulted in the protection of 155 hectares of

land valued at \$6,075,000. Funds for this project came from the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

On Salt Spring Island, the Bent property was acquired by The Nature Trust of B.C. partnering with the Province and Nature Conservancy of Canada (see Success Story below). The property includes 22.3 hectares of land valued at \$995,000.

The third property (16.19 hectares), an inholding in Skagit Valley Park, was acquired by the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission and donated to BC Parks on the condition that it be added to the park.

Success Story—BC Parks and Nature Trust of British Columbia Team up to Secure Lands on Salt Spring Island

With the purchase of the Bent property on Salt Spring Island, the last piece in the Burgoyne Bay/Mount Maxwell protected area complex was protected. This complex is situated in one of the most threatened areas in B.C., the Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone. BC Parks and The Nature Trust of British Columbia partnered in a joint agreement where the Province's contribution was \$310,000 (from the Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy Trust account, a fund set up to acquire lands in the Gulf Islands north of the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve). The land has been leased to the Province for addition to Mount Maxwell Ecological Reserve.

This conservation achievement was not only a collaborative process between The Nature Trust of British Columbia and BC Parks, it was also made possible through the generosity of the private property owner, individual donors and the Government of Canada through the Natural Areas Conservation Program as facilitated by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Along with the surrounding parks and ecological reserve, this property protects the largest stand of Garry oak woodlands in Canada.



*Bent Property, Salt Spring Island
Photo Credit: The Nature Trust of British Columbia*

Management Planning

A management plan provides long-term guidance for the management of a protected area. Management plans are developed in consultation with First Nations, local government, the public and stakeholders.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Percentage of parks and protected areas with valid approved management plans	65%	66%	68%

What it means:

In 2011/12, 23 management plans covering 29 protected areas were approved. Since 2006, this is the highest number of management plans approved in one year. The first management plans for the North Coast conservancies were approved as well as the management plan for the globally significant Khutzeymateen Park (a.k.a. Khutzeymateen/K'tzim-a-deen Grizzly Sanctuary). Eleven management plans for the conservancies on Haida Gwaii were also approved as well as the first two collaborative management plans with the Squamish Nation and the first three collaborative management plans with the Lil'wat Nation (see Success Story below). Over 68 per cent (up from 66% last year) of parks and protected areas now have valid management direction.

How it's measured:

Only 'valid' management plans are included. Management plans are considered to be 'valid' if the management plan still provides adequate strategic direction and guidance for the management of a protected area (in general, this means that the management plan has been updated or completed within the last 10 years).

There were also eighteen draft management plans released for public review through the BC Parks website. All management planning processes include a minimum of a 30-day web-based public review of the draft management plan.

Success Story—Management Plan Signing Ceremonies

BC Parks staff co-hosted two management planning signing ceremonies last spring; one with the Squamish Nation and the other with the Lil'wat Nation. These are excellent examples of the progress in collaborative management planning with First Nations and significant achievements.

In February 2012, the Squamish Nation held a signing ceremony in Squamish to celebrate the completion of the Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy Management Plan and the Brackendale Eagles Park, Baynes Island Ecological Reserve and Tantalus Park Management Plan. Together, these four areas protect almost 13,000 hectares and provide important habitat for wildlife including bald eagle and grizzly bear. Tantalus Park also provides a range of recreation opportunities, and is a popular destination for hiking, camping and mountaineering.

"This is an important day for our people and we are proud to have worked with the Province of B.C. to protect these important and sacred sites," said Squamish Nation Chief Gibby Jacob. "This work builds on the vision of the Squamish People to develop the Xay Temíxw (Sacred Lands) Land Use Plan that protects our territories and Wild Spirit Places."



BC Parks and the Squamish Nation exchange gifts.

The Lil'wat Nation and BC Parks held a community signing ceremony in Mt. Currie that celebrated the joint signing of three management plans developed collaboratively for the Qwalímak/Upper Birkenhead Conservancy, the K'zuzált/Twin Two Conservancy and Mkwál'ts Conservancy. These conservancies were established as outcomes of the Sea to Sky Land and Resource Management Plan and the Land Use Planning Agreement between the Province and Lil'wat Nation. Together, these conservancies provide protection for over 10,000 hectares which encompass the watersheds of the Upper Birkenhead River, Twin Two Creek, and Ure Creek, all of which flow into Lillooet Lake east of Pemberton.

The signing ceremony included a community feast, complete with drumming, singing and dancing, along with the formal signing of the management plans by Lil'wat Nation Chief and BC Parks leadership. These management plans represent a significant step in the development of the relationship between Lil'wat Nation and the Province and help to facilitate reconciliation of First Nations interests in the management of these special areas.

"It was excellent. We signed the agreement and had some drumming, it was great—lots of good feelings,"—Chief Lucinda Phillips



BC Parks and the Lil'wat Nation exchange gifts

Management Plans Approved in 2011/12	Protected Areas
<i>Brackendale Eagles Park, Baynes Island Ecological Reserve, Tantalus Park Management Plan</i>	<i>Baynes Island Ecological Reserve</i> <i>Brackendale Eagles Park</i> <i>Tantalus Park</i>
<i>Daawuuxusda Management Plan</i>	<i>Daawuuxusda Conservancy</i>
<i>Damaxyaa Management Plan</i>	<i>Damaxyaa Conservancy</i>
<i>Duu Guusd Management Plan</i>	<i>Duu Guusd Conservancy</i>
<i>Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy Management Plan</i>	<i>Esté-tiwilh/Sigurd Creek Conservancy</i>
<i>Huchsduwachsd Nuyem Jeas/Kitlope Heritage Conservancy Management Plan</i>	<i>Huchsduwachsd Nuyem Jeas/Kitlope Heritage Conservancy</i>
<i>K'uuna Gwaay Management Plan</i>	<i>K'uuna Gwaay Conservancy</i>
<i>K'zuzált/Twin Two Conservancy Management Plan</i>	<i>K'zuzált/Twin Two Conservancy</i>
<i>Kamdis Management Plan</i>	<i>Kamdis Conservancy</i>
<i>Khutzeymateen Park (a.k.a. Khutzeymateen/ K'tzim-a-deen Grizzly Sanctuary), Khutzeymateen Inlet Conservancy, Khutzeymateen Inlet West Conservancy Management Plan</i>	<i>Khutzeymateen Park (a.k.a. Khutzeymateen/ K'tzim-a-deen Grizzly Sanctuary)</i> <i>Khutzeymateen Inlet Conservancy</i> <i>Khutzeymateen Inlet West Conservancy</i>
<i>Kunxalas Management Plan</i>	<i>Kunxalas Conservancy</i>
<i>Lax Kwil Dziidz/Fin Conservancy Management Plan</i>	<i>Lax Kwil Dziidz/Fin Conservancy</i>
<i>Mkwál'ts Conservancy Management Plan</i>	<i>Mkwál'ts Conservancy</i>
<i>Mount Erskine Provincial Park Management Plan</i>	<i>Mount Erskine Park</i>
<i>Mount Maxwell Provincial Park Management Plan</i>	<i>Mount Maxwell Park</i>
<i>Mount Robson Park Management Plan</i>	<i>Mount Robson Park</i> <i>Mount Robson Corridor Protected Area</i> <i>Mount Robson Protected Area</i>
<i>Nang Xaldangaas Management Plan</i>	<i>Nang Xaldangaas Conservancy</i>
<i>Qwalimak/Upper Birkenhead Conservancy Management Plan</i>	<i>Qwalimak/Upper Birkenhead Conservancy</i>
<i>S^Gaay Taw Siiwaay K'adjuu Management Plan</i>	<i>S^Gaay Taw Siiwaay K'adjuu Conservancy</i>
<i>Tlall Management Plan</i>	<i>Tlall Conservancy</i>
<i>Valhalla Park Management Plan</i>	<i>Valhalla Park</i>
<i>Yaaguun Gandlaay Management Plan</i>	<i>Yaaguun Gandlaay Conservancy</i>
<i>Yaaguun Suu Management Plan</i>	<i>Yaaguun Suu Conservancy</i>

Conservation Management

Ecological Integrity

Ecological integrity occurs when an area or network of areas supports natural ecosystem composition, structure and function, and a capacity for self-renewal. BC Parks is committed to the proactive stewardship of ecological integrity.

Ecological integrity is an important concept that drives management direction in many protected areas to ensure natural areas are well managed into the future. The provincial parks and protected areas system is comprised of areas ranging from pristine wilderness to highly developed recreation areas. Therefore, ecological integrity is not a management objective that is uniformly applied across all protected areas.

Ecological integrity is a complex concept and difficult to measure directly. An assumption is made that the B.C. parks and protected areas system will be managed for ecological integrity when there is consistent application of conservation tools [e.g., Annual Management Planning (AMP), Conservation Risk Assessment (CRA), Impact Assessments, Park Use Permits, Management Plans, Compliance and Enforcement, and Conservation Policy]. Each of these tools interacts with the others, so without full use and understanding of the whole suite of tools, ecological integrity on the ground is at risk.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2011/12
Percentage of BC Parks sections (9) that conducted AMPs	100
Percentage of BC Parks sections (9) that supported the AMPs process with the use of the CRA	80
Percentage of BC Parks management areas (51) that updated information in the CRA	25
Number of management areas (51) that added data to the CRA	14

What it means:

For 2011/12, the tools used to indicate performance include Annual Management Planning and Conservation Risk Assessment. Annual Management Planning is a tool to prioritize annual work projects and Annual Management Plans are required for all parks and protected areas. The Conservation Risk Assessment catalogs the values and threats in each protected area in the province. It provides valuable input to many of the planning and evaluation processes in parks and protected areas management.

The Conservation Risk Assessment database is most effective when information is added by BC Parks staff on a continuous basis. In 2011/12, 14 of the 51 management areas added data to the CRA database, eight of the management areas added data on special features, and six management areas added data on threats.

Success Story—Conservation Specialists

Conservation Specialists are biologists working in BC Parks regional offices. The position was created in 2010 and by 2011/2012 six Conservation Specialists were working full-time across the province. Although conservation is the responsibility of every BC Parks staff person, the Conservation Specialist is the regional lead in developing and implementing the BC Parks Conservation Program, and provides support to other regional staff on conservation initiatives. Other roles and responsibilities of the Conservation Specialist include being a member of their Regional Management Team, working with provincial Conservation Program staff on regional and provincial initiatives and issues, and planning and prioritizing conservation projects related to wildlife management, invasive species, species at risk, and ecosystem restoration. Conservation Specialists are integral members of BC Parks regional team and are improving the integration of conservation throughout BC Parks.



Conservation Specialist assisting with identifying common burdock (an invasive plant)

Climate Change

In British Columbia, climate change is impacting our ecosystems, our economy and our communities.

Climate-induced changes in parks and protected areas may result from more extreme weather events, droughts, flooding, insect outbreaks, invasive species, coastal erosion and wildfires. More subtle effects will result from the gradual increase in temperature (especially in the winter) including shrinking glaciers, rising sea levels, changes to the water cycle and the movement of organisms. These changes, while not dramatic on a day-to-day basis, will affect the distribution of species and the organization of ecosystems.

The B.C. parks and protected areas system plays a key role in the response to climate change. The future of protected areas management will be in maintaining functioning ecosystems and facilitating the movement of species within and across boundaries. Large landscape level processes have always played an important role in sustaining ecosystems. These processes are now recognized as being critical in maintaining the resilience of the natural world. One of the key ways that the B.C. parks and protected areas system can address these processes is by focussing on protecting large landscapes.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2011/12
Percentage of <i>terrestrial</i> protected areas network ¹ in large landscapes >2,700 km ²	59
Percentage of <i>terrestrial</i> protected areas network in landscapes >1,000 km ²	71
Percentage of <i>terrestrial</i> protected areas network in landscapes > 500 km ²	80

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2011/12
Percentage of <i>nearshore</i> protected areas network in large landscapes >270 km ²	40
Percentage of <i>nearshore</i> protected areas network in landscapes >100 km ²	55
Percentage of <i>nearshore</i> protected areas network in landscapes >50 km ²	67

What it means:

The threshold of 2,700 km² for large terrestrial landscapes is based on work identifying minimum landscape areas to maintain disturbance-sensitive mammals. If these large mammals are maintained, there is a greater chance of sustaining ecological processes such as intact predator prey systems. Using this minimum terrestrial threshold, 59 per cent of the BC Parks' parks and protected areas system is part of large protected landscapes. In nearshore ecosystems, research indicates that the optimal size may be an order of magnitude less than in the terrestrial environment.

Success Story—BC Protected Areas Research Forum

The third BC Protected Areas Research Forum was successfully held at the University of British Columbia in December 2011. The goal of the forum was to facilitate research and its application to parks and protected areas management. The theme of the forum was *Adapting to Change*. Talks and panels included information on restoration, monitoring, climate change, tourism, impacts and benefits of protected areas on communities, public attitudes towards protected areas, connections between human health and nature, last chance tourism, white-bark pine, and fossil resources. Past province-wide conferences were held in 2006 at Royal Roads University and in 2008 at the University of Northern British Columbia.

¹ Protected areas network includes all provincially and federally designated protected areas.

Success Story—BC Parks 100 Whitebark Pine Event

In September 2011, 100 whitebark pine trees were planted in E. C. Manning Park. This long-lived, five-needled pine is restricted in Canada to high elevations in the mountains of British Columbia and Alberta. White Pine Blister Rust is projected to cause a decline of these trees of more than 50% over a 100 year time period. The effects of mountain pine beetle, climate change, and fire exclusion will increase the decline rate further. Whitebark pine traits such as delayed age at maturity, low dispersal rate, and reliance on the Clarks' Nutcracker for seed dispersal all contribute to placing this species at high risk of extinction in Canada. Whitebark pine was designated as endangered in Canada in April 2010.

In June 2004, staff worked with a student at the University of British Columbia to study conservation of whitebark pine in E. C. Manning Park. This work included the determination of the most suitable conditions for whitebark pine regeneration and prescribed fire sites for regeneration and led to the student's Master's Thesis. Since then work has continued on cone collecting and seeding (2007), restoration planning for E. C. Manning Park (2008), seedling production (2007-2011), a planting plan (2010), and in 2011 the actual planting of seedlings that originated in E. C. Manning Park. The planting of the seedlings from the 2007 seed collections in E. C. Manning Park was done in partnership with local volunteers. This is truly a celebration for conservation of biodiversity, research and partnerships.



Representation

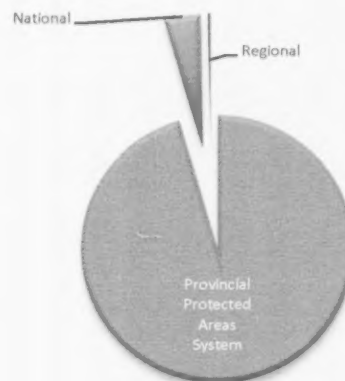
Representation contributes to the conservation of biological diversity in the province. B.C.'s parks and protected areas system is based on attaining representation of the diverse ecosystems that currently exist.

In the early 1990s, the B.C. government launched a major land use planning process with one of the primary outputs being the identification of new areas for protection. The focus of the government's Protected Areas Strategy released in 1993 was to protect 12 per cent of the province—lands made up of viable, representative examples of natural diversity in the province, representative of the major terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems. This overarching target has been exceeded and

approximately 15 per cent (includes provincial parks and protected areas and national parks) of the province is currently protected.

<i>Lands</i>	<i>Through historic park and protected area designations, and then through land use planning processes, protected lands have been selected to represent provincial land zones.</i>
<i>Lakes</i>	<i>As part of park and protected area establishment, lakes are included whenever feasible adjoining lands that have been selected for protection.</i>
<i>Marine</i>	<i>Protection of foreshore areas adjoining coastal provincial protected areas has significantly increased. Other areas of interest for protection from federal agencies are also being considered.</i>

There are several land, lake and marine zones that remain underrepresented in B.C.'s provincial protected areas system. Although this report focuses on BC Parks, there are other protected area jurisdictions in the province that contribute to the protected areas system. These include the national and regional park systems, but they have comparatively little land and their inclusion does not change the representation snapshot.



Monitoring

Monitoring is an integral part of the management of natural systems and provides an important feedback system to ensure that management actions achieve provincial, agency, and public objectives.

The Long-term Ecological Monitoring (Citizen Science) Program—initiated in 2010/2011—is a tool to monitor ecological change over time. The program will monitor changes in all major biomes (ecological communities) across the parks and protected areas system. The program relies on BC Parks staff, community groups, university classes, or other volunteers using standardized monitoring protocols (methods). Powerful results can be generated by many people contributing just a few days annually across the province.

The monitoring framework identifies eight biomes; BC Parks is directly involved in setting up plots and collecting data in five biomes. These are alpine-subalpine, forest, grassland, wetland and intertidal. Using standardized monitoring protocols, each BC Parks management area is engaged in setting up plots in two biomes. The protocols BC Parks is using have been adapted from existing methods. In 2011/12, each of the protocols were tested by staff and revised for broad application in 2012/13.



Intertidal Monitoring in Ten Mile Point
Ecological Reserve



Grassland Monitoring in Tunkwa Park

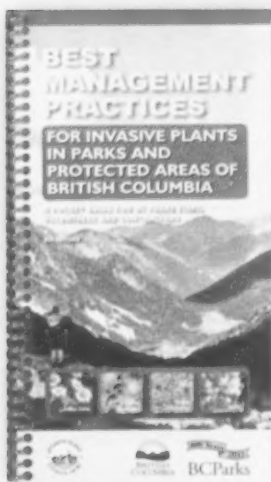
Invasive Plants

Invasive plants have the potential to cause widespread negative economic, social and environmental impacts. Once established, invasive plant infestations can displace native vegetation and reduce forage opportunities for wildlife.

In 2011/12, \$67,000 was spent on invasive plant projects. About half of these funds was allocated to the best management practices and invasive plant training (see Success Story below). The remainder was allocated to priority projects in the regions.

Success Story—Invasive Plant Training Program

New Invasive Plant Identification and Reporting training was delivered in ten locations across the province. It is estimated that 140 people including staff, volunteers and Park Facility Operators, participated in the course. The training showed how to enter data using a simple method to report invasive species. This is called Report-A-Weed and can be accessed at this site:



<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/HRA/Plants/application.htm>

The training was facilitated by a partnership with the Invasive Plant Council of B.C. In addition, a Best Management Practices Handbook was produced for the course and was provided to each participant. The goal is that more occurrence reports will be entered into the provincial database and new infestations of invasive plants will be caught early enough to enable their eradication.

Cultural Integrity

Protecting and managing cultural values, facilities, sites and landscapes are integral parts of BC Parks' mandate. BC Parks provides services and takes actions to maintain or improve the condition of cultural values. In particular, BC Parks works closely with British Columbia's diverse First Nations to ensure that their heritage is respected, conserved and enhanced.

In 2011/12, \$25,000 was allocated for cultural assessment projects for three protected areas to improve the understanding of the cultural significance and traditional importance of sites in provincial protected areas. Projects included:

- **Lax Kwaxl/Dundas and Melville Islands Conservancy**
This area is within the Coast Tsimshian Traditional Territory (Lax Kw'alaams and Metlakatla). This conservancy has some of the strongest history of First Nations cultural use, both historic and contemporary, on the whole of the North Coast. The cultural value and use assessment for Lax Kwaxl/Dundas and Melville Islands Conservancy summarizes known cultural and heritage information. A series of maps detailing the location of the various values and recommendations for management planning and future research will be provided.
- **Milligan Hills Park**
Milligan Hills Park is an important cultural area to the Doig River First Nation due to the intrinsic ecological, wildlife and heritage values. The cultural and heritage resource inventory assessment project records and documents all heritage features around Long Lake. The assessment will inform the Milligan Hills Park management planning process by identifying key heritage values to be protected.
- **Redfern-Keily Park**
Redfern-Keily Park is an important cultural area to the Prophet River First Nation. The cultural heritage assessment project provided a preliminary field scoping exercise to document cultural sites along with conducting elder interviews. The assessment report informs the Redfern-Keily Park management planning process by identifying key cultural sites to be protected. It also identifies future studies required to effectively manage cultural heritage sites within the park.

Success Story—Nuxalk Nation Cultural Awareness Event

In September 2011, the Nuxalk Nation welcomed participants from the B.C. Government, including several BC Parks staff, and the Friends of Tweedsmuir, to spend a day learning about the Nuxalk Nation culture. The workshop was planned with assistance from the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation and BC Parks. It was an inspirational and educational day for everyone. A tour of the Nuxalk Nation traditional territory began and ended at the new Administration office with stops along the way including the Healthy Beginning Centre, several stops in Tweedsmuir Park (Burnt Bridge entrance, the Big Rock Days site, Mosher Canyon). The Healthy Beginning Centre is shared by all Nuxalk Nation families. Nuxalkmc elders shared stories about the Nuxalk Nation, a highlight was the story represented by the totem in front of the Centre that tells how Raven gave light to the world. B.C. Government staff also learned about the proper protocols when coming to a First Nation and the location of pit house depressions in the park. BC Parks staff provided presentations on the importance of the park and forest ecosystems. The journey ended back at the starting point since the journey could not end until they went back to where they started from, to ensure the circle was completed.



"...I wasn't really sure what to expect going in as this was the first event of this nature I have attended. I found it profoundly helpful in starting a new relationship with the Nuxalk Nation. I have many projects I am hoping I can work in conjunction with the Nuxalk and this day was a giant step forward in enabling me to do this."—BC Parks Ranger



"Here is to a new beginning and a new working relationship."—Chief Andrew Andy



Visitor Experiences

B.C.'s parks and protected areas provide recreational services and opportunities that contribute to local economies, promote active living and support an appreciation for the natural and cultural environment.

Communities in British Columbia are experiencing demographic changes including increasing ethnic diversity and a growing population of active, retired people. Trends in the tourism industry, such as the growing interest in cultural tourism and adventure sports, are also relevant for BC Parks. Finally, broader environmental changes, such as water shortages, sea level rise and extreme weather due to climate change, may influence choices about the nature and location of outdoor activities. These changes will require BC Parks to adjust the facilities and services offered in protected areas to reach different types of user groups and to maintain high levels of visitor satisfaction.

BC Parks manages the single largest recreation operation in the province with over 10,700 vehicle accessible campsites and approximately 2,000 walk in/backcountry campsites. There are approximately 6,000 kilometres of hiking trails and 1,134 kilometres of roads across the province.

Facility Improvements

BC Parks strives to be responsive to the needs, interests and safety of its visitors. The quality of a BC Parks facility and the atmosphere which it helps to create has a significant influence on visitor satisfaction.

BC Parks' facility improvement capital budget remained unchanged from 2010/11 at \$10.98 million². In 2011/12, BC Parks invested \$10,894,000 in 84 projects in 55 parks and protected areas. Each project met at least one of the following criteria:

- Allowed BC Parks to meet regional health authority water safety priorities.
- Reduced identified high risks to visitor health and safety and cultural values.
- Refurbished central buildings and facilities in day use areas and campgrounds, with particular emphasis on increasing accessibility.
- Completed (and commence delivery on) multi-year capital investment plans for those parks with high revenue and attendance (or, in exceptional circumstances, those parks with extremely high cultural values) and poor condition of facilities to:
 - Attract young families;
 - Offer new recreation opportunities;
 - Increase revenue and attendance;
 - Improve accessibility with new park furniture and easier to use facilities;
 - Modernize appearance;

² \$86,000 was spent on land acquisition projects.

- Ensure investments are integral to natural and cultural values;
- Ensure investments highlight the uniqueness of the park; and
- Lower operating costs.

To meet these objectives, projects were completed throughout the province. The following table provides examples of where some of the investments were made.

Water and Sanitation System Projects	Trail Repairs and Upgrades	Refurbishing Central Buildings
Dry Gulch Park	Bowron Lake Park	Beaumont Park
E. C. Manning Park	Elk Falls Park	Bowron Lake
Ellison Park	Ellison Park	Cultus Lake Park
Green Lake Park	Horne Lake Caves Park	E. C. Manning Park
Juniper Beach Park	Juan de Fuca Park	Fintry Park
Kekuli Bay Park	Lucy Islands Conservancy	Garibaldi Park
Kickininee Park	Rearguard Falls Park	Green Lake Park
Mabel Lake Park	Skagit Valley Park	Herald Park
Okanagan Lake Park	Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park	Kekuli Bay Park
Porteau Cove Park	Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park	Kokanee Creek Park
Rathtrevor Beach Park	Strathcona Park	Lakelse Lake Park
Skihyst Park		Mount Assiniboine Park
Tunkwa Park		Mount Robson Park
Wells Gray Park		Shuswap Lake Marine Park
Kettle River Park		Sun-Oka Beach Park
Roderick Haig-Brown Park		Ten Mile Lake Park
		Tyhee Lake Park

BC Parks Capital Facilities Program Investments

Capital Facilities Program	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Campground & day use areas	\$1,194,500	\$3,088,400	\$2,097,800
Toilet & shower buildings	\$700,000	\$2,128,000	\$2,137,000
Water & sewer systems	\$5,473,500	\$2,066,500	\$1,419,500
Roads & trails	\$1,874,000	\$1,670,100	\$854,000
Other buildings & structures ³	\$1,532,000	\$1,427,000	\$4,385,700
Total Facilities Capital Expenditures	\$10,774,000	\$10,380,000	\$10,894,000

³ Other buildings & structures include picnic shelters, boat launches, viewing platforms, heritage building restorations, etc.

Success Story—Kikomun Creek Park Facility Revitalization

BC Parks invested \$1,095,000 in a facility revitalization project in Kikomun Creek Park. This park is the largest intensive day use area in the East Kootenay region. It is unsurpassed in the diversity and quantity of recreational opportunities provided. Kikomun Creek Park is very popular and visitors have been turned away in the past throughout the high use season due to the campgrounds being full.

A project was started in 2008 to add 37 campsites and associated facilities to the Ponderosa Campground with eleven of the campsites electrified. In 2008, planning, site layout and the impact assessment for the redevelopment of the group use facility and an unused parking area were completed. In 2009, the development started and approximately 40% of the project was completed. Completion of the campsites and operation for the camping season was completed in 2010. During 2011/12, the installation of the toilet/shower building, construction of a rental cabin, as well as the finishing touches on the project were completed in time for the opening of the camping season in June 2011.



Attendance

BC Parks is committed to attracting diverse audiences to a range of superior recreational destinations and services. The parks and protected areas system will allow visitors to have fun, discover nature and history, find inspiration and improve health and wellness.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Day Use Visits	17,532,494	17,132,601	16,813,262
Camping Visits	2,519,665	2,358,896	2,315,411
Marine Visits	206,662	187,488	207,454
Total Park Attendance	20,258,821	19,678,984	19,336,127

What it means:

The number of visitors to provincial protected areas is used to measure the contribution of protected areas to the government's priorities of healthy communities, tourism and the economy.

Visitation is affected by facilities and services, but is also strongly influenced by external factors such as local weather conditions, the value of the Canadian dollar and general tourism trends.

Overall park attendance declined by 1.6 per cent in 2011/12. Most of this decline can be attributed to an exceptionally cold and rainy summer throughout many areas of the province. Group use was also down due to fewer youth visiting the parks.

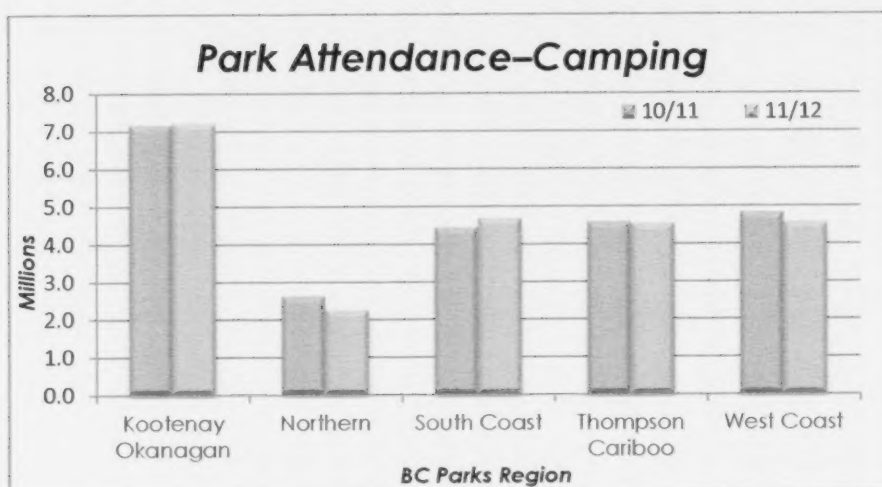
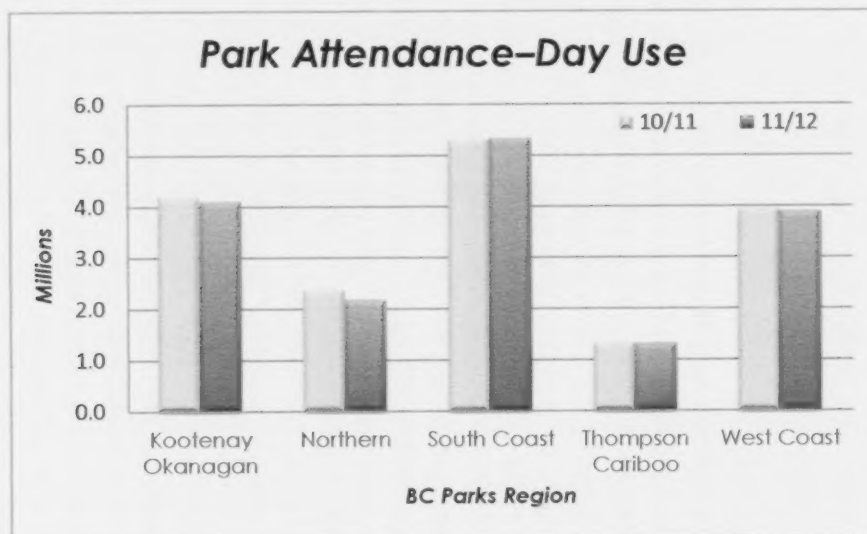
How it's measured:

BC Parks tracks attendance through campground registrations, trail and traffic counters and visual counts. In order to have standard, comparable information, all "visits" are stated in person days (so one person staying for two days counts as two "visits"). Average party sizes are applied to daily counts of cars, boats, camping parties, etc. to obtain the number of actual visits. Average party sizes are based on detailed party composition information collected through the annual visitor satisfaction surveys.

Day use attendance declined in the Northern, Kootenay Okanagan, Thompson Cariboo and West Coast regions. While most of these regions experienced small declines of approximately 1 to 2 per cent in visitation, parks in the Northern Region had almost 10 per cent fewer visitors due to extreme weather conditions which led to flooding and road closures in many areas.

Camping attendance declined in the Northern, West Coast, and Thompson Cariboo regions but showed increases in the Kootenay Okanagan and South Coast regions. Many of the parks in the Northern Region experienced significant declines in camping attendance (-16 per cent) due to flooding and construction on Hwy 97; the region's primary highway.

Significant declines were also observed in the West Coast Region due to the late spring melt throughout the region. Increases to camping visitation were mostly observed in the South Coast Region (up 5.5 per cent) as the warm, sunny weather attracted visitors from across the province.



Visitor Satisfaction

The Visitor Satisfaction Survey assesses BC Parks' effectiveness in achieving client satisfaction with protected areas and campground facilities and services.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Percentage of visitors that are satisfied with their visit	Target:	80	80	80
	Actual:	78	80	82

Note: Survey methodology was changed in 09/10 from a mail survey to an online survey. This change resulted in a delayed start for the survey period in 2009 and initial response rates were lower for the on-line survey.

What it means:

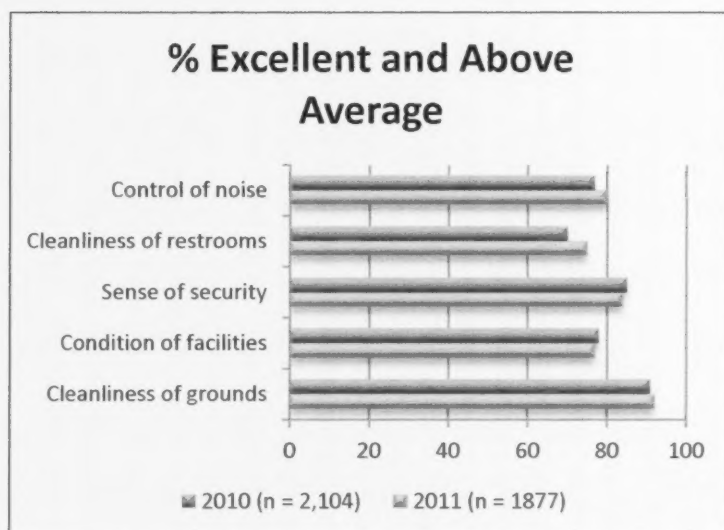
Park Facility Operator performance remains at a high overall level. Campground visitors are highly satisfied with the cleanliness of the grounds (92 per cent of visitors rated this as excellent or above average in 2011) and sense of security (about 84 per cent excellent or above average). The lowest rating for the past two years was given to the cleanliness of restrooms (about 75 per cent excellent or above average in 2011).

Cleanliness of washrooms was also the most improved service area, increasing five percent from 2010. Condition of facilities and sense of security were the only ratings to decline in 2011 (each down one per cent) but both ratings were above or near 80 per cent.

How it's measured:

Key parks are surveyed on a rotational basis, every 4 years. Surveys are usually undertaken from May 15 to the first week of September. BC Parks overall visitor satisfaction rating is based on an index of visitor responses to five questions about services:

- Cleanliness of restrooms
- Cleanliness of grounds
- Sense of security
- Control of noise
- Condition of facilities



Cleanliness of washrooms was identified as a priority in the 2010/11 Annual Report, and significant improvements were made in this area, as the rating improved to 75% from 70%. BC Parks will continue to work with Park Facility Operators to ensure regular washroom cleaning, as survey results indicate that while progress has been made in this area, there is still room for improvement.

BC Parks Reservation Service

The BC Parks Reservation Service enables visitors to book a campsite or yurt so that visitors can travel to their favourite campsite knowing the site is assured. The service can be used to view site availability, reserve a site and manage bookings.

BC Parks has had a reservation system in place since 1996. The Discover Camping Reservation Service is managed as user-pay and is not subsidized by taxpayers. The reservation, change and cancellation charges today are the same amount that visitors were charged in 1996.

The objectives of the reservation system are to:

- offer consumers certainty and peace of mind,
- provide fair and consistent access to high demand sites, and
- improve business efficiencies and customer service.

In 2011, the BC Parks Discover Camping Reservation Service offered local, national and international visitors access to campsites in 94 provincial parks. This included 78 group campsites, 8 picnic areas, 3 yurts, 2 cabins and 4,659 frontcountry campsites for a total of 4,750 individual resources on the reservation system.

More than 96,000 reservations were made through Discover Camping (more than a 10% increase from the 2010 season), with 831,645 visits to the Discover Camping website. Ninety per cent of the reservations were made on the internet, ten percent were made through the call centre (a decrease of 30 per cent from last year).

In early 2012, additional enhancements to the reservation service were made including:

- the ability to book up to three reservations at one time (shopping cart model);
- the introduction of a new first-come-first-service inventory availability tool;
- a new online refund request process was added to the website; and
- reminder emails for system users to ensure they had a chance to change or cancel their reservations prior to any penalties applying.

BC Parks will continue to enhance the reservation service by conducting annual reviews, reviewing customer feedback and by increasing the number of campgrounds and sites on the system, where appropriate.

Check out Discover Camping at <https://secure.comis.com/Discovercamping>



Backcountry Registration System

In 2011, BC Parks introduced the ability to purchase backcountry permits for 26 provincial parks through the Discover Camping Registration System. There are no service fees to purchase backcountry permits online; it is simply a convenient, alternate way to pay for permits prior to arriving in the park. During this first season, between June and December 2011, 949 backcountry permits were purchased.

BC Parks Website

BC Parks has one of the most popular websites in the provincial government. The BC Parks website provides an essential role in providing information and messages to the public.

The BC Parks website is a key information source for the public by providing real time information on parks and protected areas including important information on campfire bans and closures, wildlife issues, and upcoming events.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Number of unique visits to BC Parks website	2,094,862	2,381,450	2,629,187

What it means:

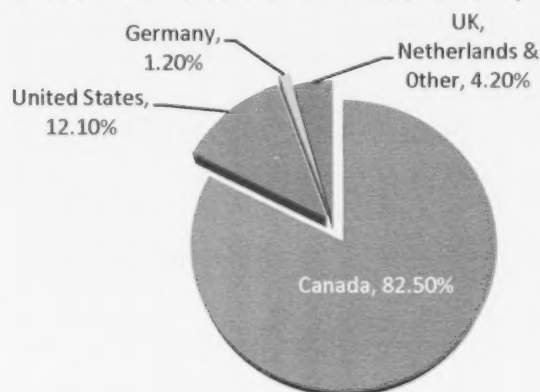
Use of the website grew by over 10 per cent from 2010 to 2011 with over 2.6 million visits. Over 7,100 visits are made to the BC Parks website each day; the average visitor spends more than 8 minutes on the website.

Although the majority of visitors to the website are from within Canada, a significant number are from the United States and other international destinations.

How it's measured:

Each unique visit represents one person with a unique address coming to the website. The number of "hits" is often quoted as a web statistic but this is inflated by the number of pages that the visitor clicks (so one visit can involve ten or more hits). Web statistics have been tracked since June 2008.

2011/12 Visits to BC Parks Website by Country



BC Parks Facebook Site

Through Facebook, BC Parks is able to share stories, parks and protected area news, and important information as well as foster conversations about parks and protected areas with our many visitors.

In February 2011, BC Parks launched a Facebook page. The response to the BC Parks Facebook page has been overwhelmingly positive, with visitors, staff, and community members posting comments, stories, photos and engaging with each other about B.C. parks and protected areas related topics. As of March 2012, there are almost 2,800 other Facebook members who “like” us, (Facebook statistics advise that BC Parks has an estimated friend of friends number of over 600,000 Facebook members).



Public Safety

BC Parks strives to provide high quality and safe recreation opportunities for visitors.

Hazard Trees

The objective of the hazard tree program is to promote the conservation of wildlife trees and associated stand-level biodiversity in a safe and operationally efficient manner.

Forests are an important part of the recreational and inspirational experience offered by BC Parks. As trees age, they may become weakened by forest pests, wildfire, wind, snow or lightning and can pose dangers to visitors. However, these trees also provide valuable habitat for wildlife. Certified assessors can recognize existing and potential wildlife trees, know how to integrate them into protected areas management and are able to distinguish between safe and dangerous trees. The trees are removed in a way that minimizes the environmental impact to the surrounding habitat.

During 2011/12, BC Parks spent approximately \$130,000 in 43 parks and protected areas on removing trees that pose a safety hazard to visitors in campgrounds, day use areas and along roads and trails.



Hazard tree removal, Cathedral Park

Fuel Management

Living in or adjacent to forests is highly desirable; however risks from potential wildfires exist in such areas. BC Parks endeavours to be good neighbours by reducing these risks through prescribed fire and tree removal to thin forests in interface areas.

Prescribed fire is used by BC Parks both to reduce forest fuels and restore ecological integrity. Prescribed fire is the controlled application of fire to a specific land area to accomplish management objectives. These fires are managed in such a way as to minimize the emission of smoke and maximize the benefits to the site.

Fire is a natural, normal process in many ecosystems and is necessary to maintain a healthy forest. Many plants and animals have adapted to fire and some actually depend on it.

In 2011/12, BC Parks treated approximately 1,500 hectares of protected area lands with prescribed fire in three protected areas: Purcell Wilderness Conservancy Park, Churn Creek Protected Area and Rubyrock Lake Park.

Compliance and Enforcement

Park rangers patrol parks and protected areas across the province, making contact with thousands of visitors each year. In most cases, rangers use education and negotiation to achieve voluntary compliance with park and protected areas rules and regulations.

In 2011/12, the most common offences that resulted in violations tickets were related to unrestrained domestic animals, failing to obey signs and unauthorized activities. For other offences, park rangers used other compliance tools such as eviction orders (in collaboration with Park Facility Operators) to address non-compliance. More serious violations, such as trespasses, continue to be addressed through more appropriate enforcement tools such as *Park Act* orders and appearance notices as appropriate.

BC Parks staff continued to be actively involved on natural resource sector inter-agency teams during 2011/12. Key partner agencies include the Conservation Officer Service, Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Natural Resource Officers, and the RCMP. As part of on-going inter-agency cooperation, Park Ranger powers were granted to Natural Resource Officers (as defined in *Natural Resource Compliance Act*). This increases the numbers of “eyes on the ground” as Natural Resource Officers are able to assist BC Parks with compliance activities.

Joint compliance and enforcement activities involving BC Parks included campfire ban enforcement, compliance and enforcement projects during long weekends [e.g., Juan de Fuca Park (Sombrio Beach), Shuswap Lake Marine Park, Newcastle Island Marine Park, Naikoon Park and Tribune Bay Park] and monitoring illegal snowmobiling in Mountain Caribou habitat (e.g., Cariboo and Omineca sections).

BC Parks was a key participant in the merging of the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations avalanche policies into the Natural Resource Sector Snow Avalanche Avoidance Policy and companion Avalanche Safety Plan, bringing consistency to Natural Resource Sector staff operating in avalanche terrain. BC Parks continues to be a leader in providing training to Natural Resource Sector staff in avalanche safety and continues to seek opportunities to collaborate on various training initiatives with partner agencies where appropriate.



Snowmobile patrol in Omineca Section



Naikoon Park inter-agency patrol including tsunami debris watch

Shared Stewardship

BC Parks has a long history of collaborating with partners to maintain and enhance B.C.'s parks and protected areas.

BC Parks partners with many organizations and community groups around the province on specific projects such as: trail building and maintenance, infrastructure improvements, weed pulls, restoration projects, and interpretive programs. In addition, BC Parks encourages partnerships with universities, non-profit organizations and community groups to pursue research or monitoring projects of mutual interest. Finally, BC Parks partners with private individuals, corporations, agencies and the non-profit sector to acquire land to be included in the parks and protected areas system.

BC Parks works very closely with Park Facility Operators and First Nations in the management of parks and protected areas.

Park Facility Operators

Park Facility Operators are private sector partners who provide onsite management, visitor services and routine maintenance in most day use areas and campgrounds.

Since the late 1980s, BC Parks has contracted Park Facility Operators to deliver services to visitors in all of BC Parks' frontcountry parks. In 2003, BC Parks introduced a new model that bundled (or grouped) multiple parks in a geographical area to be operated by Park Facility Operators under one agreement.

In 2011/12, 22 Parks Facility Operators operated 29 bundles of parks. These bundles include the frontcountry areas of 201 parks in the province. In addition, 50 parks are operated under individual contracts (i.e., non-bundled parks).

Engaging First Nations

BC Parks values strong relationships with First Nations in managing protected areas. Parks and protected areas protect places and values that are important to First Nations' culture and economy.

Collaborative management agreements and other partnerships with First Nations are important components in the management of protected areas.

There are now 35 collaborative management agreements in place and 10 more under negotiation. These are agreements between a First Nation and BC Parks regarding the protected areas within that First Nation's traditional territory. These agreements define how BC Parks and First Nations will work together to plan and manage the protected areas by establishing mechanisms for First Nations and BC Parks staff to work collaboratively on protected area management plans and the review of proposals for commercial activities.

BC Parks also works with First Nations and other government ministries to ensure First Nations communities are able to benefit from the economic opportunities created by protected areas, particularly in the tourism sector. This work supports efforts by First Nations to diversify the economy of their communities and provide sustainable employment opportunities for community members.

Success Story—Golden Ears Park Longhouse

Golden Ears Park has some of the most extensive infrastructure development in the BC Parks system. In recent years, the use of a large public amphitheatre had decreased and by 2010 the structure was starting to look its age. In 2011, BC Parks approached the Katzie First Nation to see if they would be interested in re-purposing the amphitheatre and moving it to another location in the park where they previously had a longhouse (built by BC Parks). This longhouse had been used for cultural activities by the First Nation but it had burnt down in 2006 and funding was not available to rebuild it. The location of the longhouse, and Golden Ears Park, falls within Katzie traditional territory. The First Nation has a strong interest in park management and a long history of traditional use throughout Golden Ears Park that is evident by the number of archaeological sites that can be found around Allouette Lake.

The Katzie First Nation recognized the value in relocating the amphitheatre and the work was completed in 2011. As a result, BC Parks was able to upgrade components of the existing amphitheatre to increase its overall lifespan, while providing the opportunity for the Katzie First Nation to use the area more frequently as a location for band members to attend cultural events and activities. The upgraded structure also provides members of the public with a place to take shelter from inclement weather, or to take in the spectacular views of Allouette Lake.



Volunteers

BC Parks has always benefited from contributions made by volunteers.

Much of the parks and protected areas system we know today has not only been established, but built by individuals and groups donating time and labour. There are many activities in which volunteers are actively engaged in the BC Parks system, including: campground hosts, facility restoration, interpretation, Park Watch activities, ecological reserve wardens, trespass monitoring, invasive plant control, ecological inventories, trail and campsite construction and maintenance, fundraising, educational programs, protected area management and planning, and many more.

Throughout 2011, numerous volunteers and community partners contributed significantly to the success of the BC Parks 100 celebrations. To build on this momentum, BC Parks committed to developing a Volunteer Strategy that would be informed by past, current and future volunteers as well as BC Parks staff. BC Parks hosted eleven community workshops and an online survey throughout February and March 2012.



The objectives of the public engagement process were:

- To engage past, present and future volunteers in providing comments that will be incorporated into a BC Parks volunteer strategy.
- To identify successes of past and current volunteer experiences.
- To explore new ideas and possibilities for volunteering in B.C.'s parks and protected areas.
- To understand challenges faced by past and current volunteers.
- To identify solutions to overcome these challenges and enable volunteers.
- To identify ways to improve communication about volunteering in B.C.'s parks and protected areas.

Workshops were held around the province with participation of approximately 200 people in the workshops. Communities included: Victoria, Vancouver, Campbell River, Penticton, Kamloops, Cranbrook, Nelson, Prince George, Smithers, Williams Lake, and Haida Gwaii (Tlell). Over 600 participants completed the online survey. Also, about 100 BC Parks employees participated in the staff workshops. A summary of the public input is available on the BC Parks website:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/volunteers/docs/BCParksVolunteerPublicEngagement-Report.pdf>

A final version of the Volunteer Strategy will be released in 2012/13 and implemented on an ongoing basis.



BC Parks Volunteer Strategy workshop locations

Partnerships and Donations

BC Parks offers numerous ways for individuals and organizations to support and protect the parks and protected areas system and there is a long history of collaborating with partners to maintain and enhance B.C.'s parks and protected areas.

The BC Parks Partnership and Donation Program is designed to provide opportunities for individual citizens, community groups, non-government agencies and private corporations to work with BC Parks on mutually beneficial projects.

The Park Enhancement Fund was created in 2008. It supports BC Parks in earning revenues and attracting donations which can be reinvested in the provincial parks and protected areas system. Donations can be directed to specific projects or parks and protected areas and BC Parks can issue charitable tax receipts for donations made to the Park Enhancement Fund.

Donation amounts vary significantly from year to year and cannot be predicted with any accuracy. However, BC Parks is clearly becoming known as a valuable partner and has attracted significant donations since the establishment of the Park Enhancement Fund. Since 2008, the Park Enhancement Fund has raised over \$1.3 million from donations and community and corporate partnerships.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR*	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Corporate Partnerships & Sponsorships	\$119,300	\$132,301	\$202,000
Community Partnerships	\$28,750	\$33,983	\$95,718
Donations & Make Your Program	\$21,025	\$10,725	\$255,891
Other (i.e., merchandise)		\$1,161	\$1,643
Total partnership contributions to the Park Enhancement Fund	\$169,075	\$178,170	\$555,252

** BC Parks recently amended the categories to better reflect contributions to Park Enhancement Fund; these are different from the 2010/11 annual report.*

Success Story—100 for 100 Park Bench Challenge

In June 2011, BC Parks launched the "100 for 100 Park Bench Challenge" to help celebrate BC Parks' centennial anniversary. This initiative challenged community groups, businesses, individuals and families to come together and sponsor a bench in a provincial park. The *100 for 100 Challenge* was about engaging communities and businesses in BC Parks' 100th birthday and giving them an opportunity to leave their own legacy in a park. BC Parks is proud to announce that all 100 park benches were sponsored!

The 100 for 100 Park Bench Challenge offered people a chance to recognize a special connection to a particular park, remember a special person in their life, or simply show their support for BC Parks. These limited-edition park benches, made from recycled plastic, provide 100 excellent resting places for park visitors to relax and enjoy one of the many inviting vistas BC Parks has to offer. Each bench has a customized bronze-casted plaque and includes metal armrests on each end to make them more accessible to those with mobility challenges.

Funds collected over and above the cost of the benches are going into the Park Enhancement Fund and will be used to improve park facilities across B.C. We would like to thank all of the generous individuals, families and businesses from across B.C., Canada and the world who met the *100 for 100 Park Bench Challenge*!



Bench at French Beach Park

Economic and Financial Benefits

Revenues and Operating Expenditures

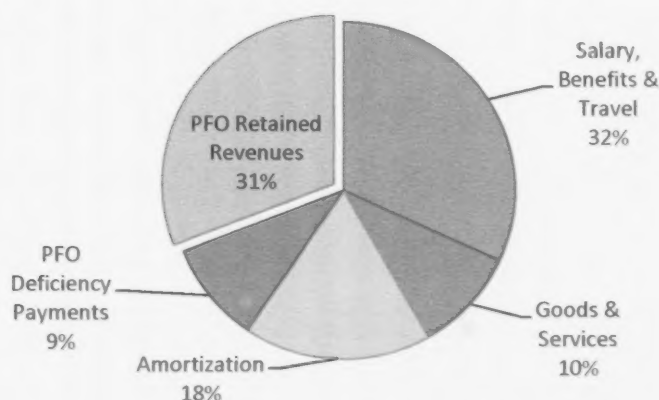
B.C.'s parks and protected areas system is the single largest recreation operation in the province.

In 2011/12, camping, boating and day use fees generated about \$15.5 million. Another \$1.5 million in fees for activities requiring park use permits was collected. The majority of these revenues are re-invested in the parks and protected areas system.

BC Parks Revenues & Operating Expenditures 2011/12

BC Parks' Operating Budget (vote): \$33.5M

Total Operating Expenditures
(vote plus retained revenue) \$48.5M



BC Parks Revenues (in millions)

Type of Fee	Total		Retained by PFOs		Paid to Crown	
	2010/11	2011/12	2010/11	2011/12	2010/11	2011/12
Recreation User Fees	\$16.5	\$15.5	\$15.6	\$15.0	\$0.9	\$0.5
Permit Fees	\$1.4	\$1.5	\$0	\$0	\$1.4	\$1.5
Totals	\$17.9	\$17.0	\$15.6	\$15.0	\$2.3	\$2.0

Notes:

- All fees paid for the right to use protected areas (park use permit fees) are paid into government's consolidated revenue fund.
- Some recreation user fees are also paid into government's consolidated revenue fund. These include: excess camping fees from profitable operations and miscellaneous revenues such as Maquinna Hotspring user fees and some backcountry fees.
- PFOs=Park Facility Officers.
- PFO Deficiency Payments= Public funds provided to Park Facility Operators to cover the portion of operating costs that exceed revenues generated from recreation user fees.

Park Use Permits

A permit is required for many types of commercial use, land use/land occupancy, and research activities that take place in parks and protected areas. Park use permits are tool for managing park and protected area values and commercial activities.

In 2011/12, BC Parks managed approximately 1,212 permits (1,730 permits in 2010/11) covering a wide variety of purposes including commercial recreation, filming, communication sites and research activities. The decline in the number of active park use permits in 2011/12 is a result of fewer permits expiring during 2011/12 than in previous years. With fewer permit holders applying for new permits, the total number of permits which were active was skewed downward.

Revenues for park use permits have increased by 8% from 2010/11.

BC Parks uses ePUPs (Electronic Park Use Permit System) across the province to provide a "one window, one process" approach to the management of all park use permits. This system provides an efficient and transparent means in which all authorizations are generated and maintained. The ePUPs system has improved financial management for park use permits (fee payment, insurance and security deposits, etc.), and recommended updates to the system are identified annually to continually improve the functionality for processing and managing park use permit files.

Active Park Use Permits

Permit Type	2010/11	2011/12
<i>Commercial Recreation</i>	619	445
<i>Land Use Occupancy</i>	560	421
<i>Ecological Reserve</i>	48	32
<i>Trapline</i>	155	98
<i>Film</i>	68	43
<i>Research</i>	231	138
<i>Other</i>	49	35
Total	1,730	1,212

Notes:

- Numbers do not include Park Facility Operators.
- Commercial Services includes recreational, big game, angle guiding and associated structures, transportation, commercial services, special events, accommodation.
- Land Use/Occupancy includes structures, utilities, roads, etc.



Economic Benefits

Parks and protected areas make significant contributions to the tourism industry and the economy of local communities throughout B.C.

Spending on park programs and visitors' spending, have a substantial and recurring impact on the provincial economy, creating jobs, generating income for local businesses and producing tax revenue for the government, year after year. People and businesses are drawn to the spectacular places being managed and protected by BC Parks. Commercial tour operations and film companies, in particular, rely on the natural and cultural assets within B.C.'s parks and protected areas.

In July 2011, *The Economic Impact of Canada's National, Provincial and Territorial Parks in 2009* (prepared by The Outspan Group Inc.) was released by the Canadian Parks Council. This report shows that:

- The \$47 million in operating and capital expenditures (excludes amortization) by BC Parks and PFOs led to \$394 million in expenditures by visitors. In other words, every one dollar invested in the protected areas system generates \$8.42 in visitor spending on food, entertainment, transportation and other goods and services.
- Provincial park-related spending generated over \$28 million in tax revenues (sales and production taxes only, does not include income tax effects), returning 60 per cent of BC Parks' capital and operating expenditures.
- The combined economic impact of this spending is a \$392 million boost to GDP and over 5,200 full-time jobs.

For more information on BC Parks and the protected areas system including information in this report, visit the BC Parks website at <http://www.bcparks.ca>